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Information Bulletin

Grade 3 English Language Arts 1997-98

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓ Grade 3 Teachers
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

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This bulletin contains general information about the Achievement Testing Program and information specific to the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test. **It replaces all previous bulletins.**

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September 1997

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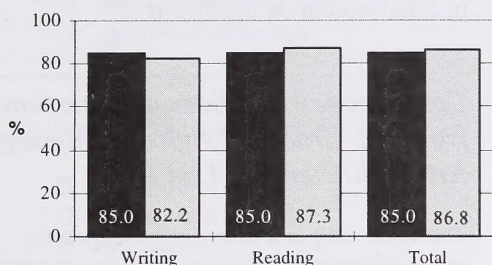
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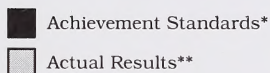
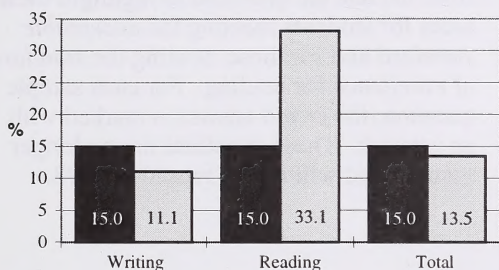
Looking Back: Highlights of 1997

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the results for the June 1997 Grade 3 Language Arts provincial assessment. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

Acceptable Standard



Standard of Excellence



*the percentage of students in the province expected to meet the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence

**the percentage of students in the province who met the standards (based on those who wrote)

Who Wrote the Test?

All students registered in Grade 3 were expected to write the 1997 English Language Arts Achievement Test. A total of 40 385 students wrote both parts of the test and were included in reported results. In 1997, only a small proportion of students in Grade 3 did not write the test: 1.4% of students were absent and 2.8% of students were excused from writing by their superintendent, and an additional 1.6% of students wrote only one part of the test.

What Was the Test Like?

The test had two parts.

Part A: Writing provided students with a picture and a brief explanation as a prompt for their writing. Students chose the format (narrative, letter, or diary/journal entries) that would allow them to do their best writing. This part of the test was scored in five categories: Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions. Content and Organization were weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.

Part B: Reading consisted of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media.

How Well Did Students Do?

Overall, students demonstrated the expected learnings, as assessed by the test. However, fewer students (82.2%) than expected met the acceptable standard for writing. More students (33.1%) than expected met the standard of excellence for reading.

In 14.6% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was significantly above expectations for the province. In 72.3% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was not significantly different from provincial expectations. In 13.1% of schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was significantly below provincial expectations. Schools where fewer than five students wrote the Grade 3 test are not included in these school calculations.

Has Achievement Changed Since Last Year?

Results show an increase in achievement in reading from 1996 to 1997. The 1997 writing results are comparable to the previous year. Results also show an increase in achievement on the total test.

Commentary and Sample Questions from the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test 1997

The following is a discussion of specific areas of strength and weakness for students in Grade 3 classrooms. Sample questions from the test are provided to highlight these areas for students meeting the *acceptable standard* and for those meeting the *standard of excellence* for reading. For each sample question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk. These questions are no longer secured and will not be reused in 1998.

Acceptable Standard

For **question 2**, students relate what they already know to new information encountered in text. Of students meeting the *acceptable standard*, 90% were able to do this.

In **question 5**, students were required to locate key details that were explicitly stated in an article. Over 95% of students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

The strengths of students who met the *acceptable standard* include the ability to

- locate and attend to key details
- draw conclusions using given information
- use prior knowledge to enhance understanding
- recognize word meaning using context and semantic clues

The difficulties that students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* experienced were in their ability to

- determine an author's purpose
- identify sequence of details
- recognize genre
- use literary devices to predict possible outcomes
- recognize author's rhyming technique

Standard of Excellence

Question 8 required students to make an inference based on information presented in an article. Over 85% of the students meeting the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

Question 32 required students to identify the specific genre of a narrative passage. Over 85% of students meeting the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

2. Jodie's dad used binoculars to

- ☐ find the hiking trail
- ☐ scare the bear
- * ☐ see something far away
- ☐ go to the hot springs

5. How big is a blue whale's heart?

- ☐ The size of a train
- * ☐ As big as a car
- ☐ 30 metres
- ☐ 136 tonnes

8. Scientists hope that blue whales will

- * ☐ become more plentiful
- ☐ turn into gentle animals
- ☐ have a 20-metre blow
- ☐ be an endangered species

32. This writing is MOST LIKELY part of a

- ☐ legend
- ☐ poem
- * ☐ novel
- ☐ fairy tale

Overall, students who met the *standard of excellence* had few difficulties with this assessment. These students show strengths in their ability to

- use contextual clues to recognize meanings of words and phrases
- use prior knowledge and experience to enhance understanding
- identify sequence of details
- identify resources used for particular genre
- recognize an author's technique

Reporting the Results

On August 22, 1997, each school jurisdiction received electronically a district report and individual school reports regarding their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staff (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

Two copies of an individual profile for each student will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We expect that the Parent Copy be given to parents and the School Copy will remain with the student's record.

The following Achievement tests are secured:
Grade 6 Mathematics, 1995
ALL tests from 1996 and 1997

Looking Ahead: What is Upcoming for 1998

General Information

Purpose

The purpose of the Achievement Testing Program is to

- determine if students are learning what they are expected to learn
- report to Albertans how well students have achieved provincial standards at given points in their schooling
- assist schools, jurisdictions, and the province in monitoring and improving student learning

Enhance Student Learning

Careful examination and interpretation of the results can help identify areas of relative strength and weakness in student achievement. Teachers and administrators can use this information in planning and delivering relevant and effective instruction in relation to broad, general learnings in the *Program of Studies*.

Enable Accountability

Alberta Education and school jurisdiction personnel are responsible for ensuring that the highest quality education is provided to all students in the province.

Information about achievement is provided to

- schools and jurisdictions
- parents
- the public

so that they may know how well students in their schools are meeting local targets and provincial expectations.

Interpreting Results

Achievement tests assess only part of what is to be learned. In addition, many factors contribute to student achievement. Personnel at the jurisdiction and school levels are in the best position to appropriately interpret, use, and communicate jurisdiction and school results in the local context.

The Achievement Testing Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards that reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Tests

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*, which is mailed each fall to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The schedule for administering achievement tests in the 1997–98 school year is mandated.

January 1998

The January achievement tests for Grade 9 schools on a semester system must be administered according to the following schedule:

Wednesday, January 21	9:00 to 11:30 A.M.	Grade 9 English Language Arts Part A
Thursday, January 22	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Science
Friday, January 23	9:00 to 11:30 A.M.	Grade 9 Français/French Language Arts Partie A
Monday, January 26	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 English Language Arts Part B
Tuesday, January 27	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Mathematics
Wednesday, January 28	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Social Studies
Thursday, January 29	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Français/French Language Arts Partie B

May 1998

The written component of the language arts achievement tests for grades 3, 6, and 9 must be administered according to the following schedule:

Tuesday, May 26	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 3 English Language Arts Part A
	9:00 to 11:30 A.M.	Grades 6 and 9 English Language Arts Part A
Thursday, May 28	9:00 to 11:30 A.M.	Grades 6 and 9 Français/French Language Arts Partie A

June 1998

The machine-scorable component of achievement tests for grades 3, 6, and 9 must be administered according to the following schedule:

Monday, June 15	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 3 English Language Arts Part B
	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 6 English Language Arts Part B
Wednesday, June 17	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 3 Mathematics
	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 6 Mathematics
Thursday, June 18	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 6 Social Studies
	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Français/French Language Arts Partie B
Friday, June 19	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Science
Monday, June 22	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 6 Science
	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 English Language Arts Part B
Tuesday, June 23	9:00 to 10:30 A.M.	Grade 6 Français/French Language Arts Partie B
	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Mathematics
Wednesday, June 24	9:00 to 10:45 A.M.	Grade 9 Social Studies

The tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing*
and *Part B: Reading*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing*
and *Part B: Reading*)
Français/French Language Arts (*Partie A:*
Production écrite and *Partie B: Lecture*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)
Social Studies (English and French forms)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing*
and *Part B: Reading*)
Français/French Language Arts (*Partie A:*
Production écrite and *Partie B: Lecture*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)
Social Studies (English and French forms)

Students in French Programs

All students in French programs must write English Language Arts, French Language Arts, and French versions of other achievement tests if their language of instruction is French. Alberta Education will send a checklist to schools in January requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-February.

Marking Achievement Tests Locally

Teachers are able to mark the tests before returning them to Alberta Education. Teachers can use the results as part of an individual student's year end assessment, as well as for planning instruction.

Standards: Curriculum, Assessment, Achievement

The move toward results-based curricula has re-emphasized the need for a clear delineation of standards and their purpose. All standards and all methods of setting standards require judgement.

The process of setting a standard can only be as good as the judgements that go into it. The standard will depend on whose judgements are involved in the process. In this sense, all standards are subjective. Yet once a standard has been set, the decisions based on it can be made objectively. Instead of a separate set of judgements for each test-taker, you will have the same set of judgements applied to all test-takers. Standards cannot be objectively determined, but they can be objectively applied.¹

Definitions

The Achievement Testing Program is directly concerned with three different but related standards. These provincial standards are curriculum standards, assessment standards, and achievement standards. Local targets are also described in this section.

- **Curriculum Standards** are the expected student learnings sequenced into grade levels. They include broad statements of knowledge, skills, and attitude expectations against which student performance is judged. These standards are established in the process of curriculum development and are found in the *Program of Studies* document produced for each subject.

¹ Passing Scores; Samuel A. Livingston, Michael J. Zieky; Educational Testing Service, 1982.

- **Assessment Standards** are the criteria adopted for judging actual student achievement relative to curriculum standards. They are ultimately expressed and applied to test scores. They are derived from answers to questions such as: What scores must a student obtain or how many questions on a given test must a student answer correctly in order for his/her performance on the test to be judged as acceptable or excellent?

- **Achievement Standards** are judgements that specify what percentages of students are expected to achieve an acceptable and an excellent level of performance in relation to each course of studies; i.e., to the relevant curriculum standards. They reflect a community judgement about what is an appropriate expectation for students. It is important to point out that this judgement is not a prediction of the percentage of students who will actually achieve acceptable or excellent levels of performance, but rather a specification of the percentage of students at a given grade or year in school who are *expected* to achieve the acceptable (85%) or excellent standard (15%). **The 85% of students expected to meet the acceptable standard includes those students who meet the standard of excellence.** These standards apply to school, jurisdiction, and provincial performance.

- **Local targets** are goals set in schools/districts to focus plans for helping students learn what is expected by the provincial government. These local targets reflect the specific needs of students, the views of teachers, school administration, and the local community, and the resources available to provide learning opportunities for students.

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process whereby judgements about students' performance on the assessment are made in relation to provincial standards. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to Appendix A of the *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report, June 1993 Administration*. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the current *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students are doing in reading and writing by the end of Grade 3. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 3 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education. By comparing actual results with expected provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is, in fact, “good enough.”

Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 3 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 3 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured.

Acceptable Standard

Writing

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts are able to retell a series of connected personal experiences as a narrative and to tell stories from their own perspective. They use narrative formats on their own. They use a writing style that generally holds the reader's interest.

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* use relevant but general details and/or ideas in their writing. They focus the writing on the important ideas related to a topic and to arrange those ideas in a discernible order. They provide a beginning and an ending that are connected to the ideas presented in the piece. They also compose stories following a basic story structure.

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* experiment with words and sentence structures to express their ideas and experiences. They use words and expressions that are clear, although general rather than specific.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts use complete sentences, with correct capitalization and end punctuation, most of the time. They spell many familiar words correctly and unfamiliar words phonetically.

Standard of Excellence

Writing

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts are able to comfortably retell a series of connected experiences as a narrative and to tell stories from their own perspective or from another perspective. They experiment with a variety of narrative formats. They express a unique experience and their own personality through their choice of topic, characters, actions, and specific language, using a style that captivates and holds the reader's interest.

To meet the *standard of excellence*, students use specific details and/or ideas that are appropriate for achieving the purpose of the writing. They focus the writing on the important ideas related to a topic, and arrange them in a logical sequence without gaps in the presentation of information. They begin their writing in an interesting manner and to draw it to a conclusion that is related to the focus of the piece. They compose stories that incorporate setting, problem, and external responses of the main characters and resolution. They also experiment with dialogue in their writing.

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* experiment with words and sentence structures to express ideas and experiences. They show control and variation in their use of sentence structure and to choose specific words to create desired effects.

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts correctly use capital letters, periods, and question and exclamation marks. They produce correct spellings for frequently used words and apply their knowledge of common spelling patterns correctly when spelling unfamiliar words.

Acceptable Standard

Reading

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* for reading in Grade 3 Language Arts are able to read and understand a variety of types of fiction and non-fiction materials that are commonly found in Grade 3 classrooms. They use the features of narrative/poetic and informational text to aid understanding. They use their own prior experiences and knowledge of language, as well as context clues, in order to make meaning from text. They recognize explicit relationships between events and characters in a story. Students meeting the *acceptable standard* explore print and non-print sources to extend knowledge, retell key details or important ideas, and draw conclusions.

Standard of Excellence

Reading

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* for reading in Grade 3 Language Arts are able to read and clearly understand an increasing variety of genres, including those that are not the usual story form. They use their understanding of the organizational structure and presentation of narrative/poetic and informational text to assist them as readers. They draw on prior experiences, knowledge of language, and context clues in order to make meaning from text. They understand explicit as well as implicit relationships between events and characters in a story. Students meeting the *standard of excellence* explore print and non-print sources to extend knowledge, and to synthesize information and draw conclusions or make judgements.

Grade 3 English Language Arts Assessment

General Description

The Grade 3 English Language Arts Assessment consists of two components.

- *Part A: Writing* consists of one writing assignment to be given during a period totalling approximately 70 minutes, possibly the 20-minute period directly preceding recess (10 minutes for discussion, 10 minutes for planning) and the 50-minute period directly following recess (drafting and revising). Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided for students to complete Part A: Writing.
- *Part B: Reading* consists of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media. The test is divided into 2 sections. Section I has 20 questions and Section II has 20 questions. The test is designed to be completed in 60 minutes.

Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided for students to complete Part B: Reading.

A break should be provided between Section I and Section II.

The booklet for Part B: Reading contains both the reading selections and the questions. Students record their answers in the test booklet.

Students may **NOT** use a dictionary when completing either Part A or Part B.

Part A: Writing

Important Information to Note!

Students may do their writing using a word processor. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the written component of the achievement test, see the General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program, Grades 3, 6, and 9.

For *Part A: Writing*, students will be given an illustrated writing prompt and will be allowed to choose the format that best fits their approach to the prompt (narrative, letter, diary/journal entries). The person who administers the test will read the instructions and the story prompt aloud to the students.

Students will be given time to discuss the prompt with classmates in groups of two to four children, or to think alone about it, and to plan their response before beginning to write.

The booklet for *Part A: Writing* includes a page for ideas/planning, followed by lined pages for writing.

The writing blueprint is given on page 12 and a practice assignment for classroom use is presented on pages 14 and 15. It illustrates the kind of writing prompt that will appear on the assessment.

Scoring guides follow on pages 16 to 20. Teachers should discuss the practice assignment and scoring criteria with their students.

Blueprint for Part A: Writing

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<p>*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose)</p> <p>Students select appropriate details to describe events and characters, and their actions. Events and/or actions should be plausible within the context established by the writer.</p> <hr/> <p>*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole)</p> <p>Students organize ideas, events, and details in a coherent sequence.</p> <hr/> <p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively)</p> <p>Students use a variety of sentence types and structures appropriately.</p> <hr/> <p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students use words and expressions appropriately and effectively.</p> <hr/> <p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.</p>	<p>The writing assignment follows a writing prompt that will be read aloud to students, and some pictures to help stimulate the imagination of the students. The assignment allows the student to select the format that would best fit his/her approach to the prompt.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p> <p>Meets the standard of excellence</p> <p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p> <p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p> <p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p> <p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p> <p>INS insufficient</p>

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Marking

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using the scoring guides presented on pages 16 to 20, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will also be provided to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Education and used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In case of a discrepancy between the two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual and group results can be reported.

Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once. A small percentage of these papers will be marked a second time for inter-rater reliability.

All papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July. The Student Evaluation Branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 160 Grade 3 teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 3 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking. Markers will be contacted in May. The list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15. Group leaders will meet before the marking session.

Practice Writing Assignment

The practice assignment and instructions that follow are similar in format and content to those that will be presented on the Grade 3 Language Arts Achievement Test.

Grade 3 Achievement Test
English Language Arts
Part A: Writing

Description

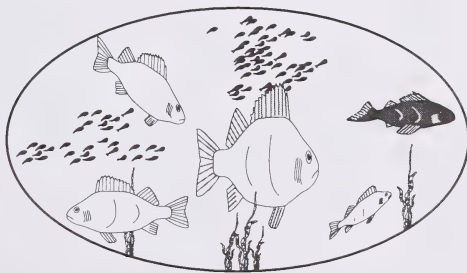
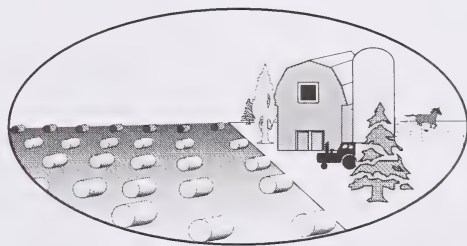
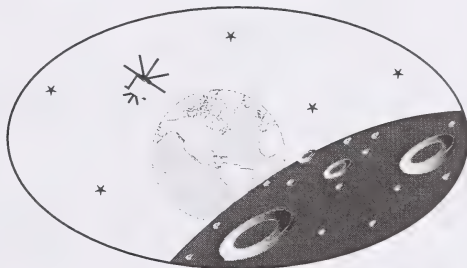
In this test, you will have 10 minutes for discussion, 10 minutes for planning, and 50 minutes to complete your writing.

Instructions

- Read the story starter as your teacher reads it aloud.
- Talk with your classmates about the writing activity or think about it by yourself.
- Plan your writing on page 3 in whatever way you choose (web, list, pictures, etc.)
- Choose the kind of writing (story, letter, diary/journal entries) that will allow you to show your **best** work.
- Print or write as neatly as you can.
- When you have finished, **check your work carefully** and correct any mistakes.
- You do not have to fill all the pages with writing. If you need more pages, your teacher can staple extra pages to your booklet.

How exciting! You find yourself in one of these places.

Write about the **interesting** adventure you have while you are there!



Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- relationship between events, actions, and the context (situation) established by the writer
- specificity of detail
- reader/writer relationship

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, actions, and/or ideas are consistently appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are specific and consistently effective. • The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are specific and generally effective. • The writing engages and generally holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are general and may be predictable, but are appropriate. • The writing generally holds the reader's attention.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are few and/or may be repetitive. • The writing does not hold the reader's attention.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are few events, actions, and/or ideas. • Details are scant. • The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.

ORGANIZATION

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- beginning
- connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters
- ending

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning captures the reader's attention, clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are consistently maintained. • The ending ties events and/or actions together.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting and provides direction for the writing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are maintained. • The ending provides an appropriate finish for events and/or actions.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning directly presents information about events, characters, and or setting. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are generally maintained. • The ending is predictable and/or may be contrived but is connected to events and/or actions.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning may be confusing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are unclear, missing, or inconsistent. • The ending is predictable and/or may be contrived.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning provides little information. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are missing. • The ending, if present, is unconnected to the events and/or actions.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- presence of different sentence patterns and length

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are varied and effective.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually varied and effective.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled but may occasionally impede the meaning. • Sentences may vary in type and length.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is sometimes lacking control, and this often impedes meaning. • There is little variation of sentence type and/or length.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought units are difficult to recognize, and this severely impedes the meaning. • There is no variation of sentence type and/or length.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

VOCABULARY

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- quality of words and expressions
- specificity of words and expressions

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used to create vivid images. • Words and expressions are consistently precise and effective.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are descriptive. • Words and expressions are generally specific and effective.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are clear. • Words and expressions are usually more general than specific.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are basic. • Words and expressions may be repetitive.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are simple and/or ineffective. • Words indicate a lack of vocabulary for writing.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

CONVENTIONS

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider

- end punctuation and capitalization
- spelling
- clarity

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization are correct. • Most words, familiar and unfamiliar, are spelled correctly; spelling errors are understandable “slips.” • Errors that are present do not affect the clarity or effectiveness of communication.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization are essentially correct. • Familiar words are spelled correctly; spelling errors are “slips”; unfamiliar words may be spelled phonetically. • Errors that are present rarely affect the clarity of communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional end punctuation and capitalization are usually correct. • Many familiar words are spelled correctly; errors suggest uneven control of spelling rules; unfamiliar words are generally spelled phonetically. • Errors are sometimes intrusive and may affect the clarity of communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization, when present, are inconsistent. • Many familiar words are misspelled and/or spelled phonetically. • Errors interfere with the clarity of communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little, if any, evidence that the writer understands correct use of end punctuation and capitalization. • Words may be difficult to discern and are generally spelled phonetically. • Communication is not clear.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 3 Language Arts Achievement Test consists of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media.

The reading blueprint for the assessment is on page 22.

The practice questions on pages 23 to 28 appeared on the 1997 Achievement Test and may be used with students. Other questions from the 1997 achievement test remain secured. The practice questions, along with questions from previous bulletins, can be used to prepare students for the current achievement test. These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1998 test, although the emphasis may be slightly different. The key and descriptors for the sample questions are on page 29.

Development

Reading selections were chosen according to the following general guidelines.

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be

complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.

- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 3 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 3 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guided question development.

- Questions related to each reading selection should be arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the students' ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.
- The assessment blueprint must support important learnings for Grade 3 students.

Blueprint for Part B: Reading

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified. The number of questions in each category is approximate.

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
1. Understanding Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to identify key details and main ideas, differentiate between main and supporting characters, recognize character motivation and explicit relationships between events and characters, and categorize ideas.	4	12	16	40
2. Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to identify genre (stories, poetry, plays, reports, and articles), organize features of story structure, use text and typographical features, recognize author's techniques, and determine an author's purpose.	4	4	8	20
3. Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words, expressions, and literary devices from prior knowledge and contextual clues.	2	5	7	17.5
4. Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions by relating what is known to new information, and assess the plausibility of ideas and situations in literature.	3	6	9	22.5
Number of Questions	13	27	40	100
Percent of Test	32.5	67.5	100	100

Practice Reading Questions

I. Read the following postcard and answer questions 1 to 4.



Hi Carolyn!

Banff is great! We've been here three days now and each day has been exciting. First, we went hiking in the national park. We saw beautiful flowers and trees. Dad told me this park is a safe place for animals, too. We saw mountain goats, deer, and elk. Dad even spotted a bear through his binoculars. He said it was a big brown bear sitting by a stream. We also went to the hot springs. The warm water is wonderful on a chilly day. I'll show you pictures when I get home.

Your friend, Jodie



To: Carolyn Brown
27 Pine Avenue
Westwood, Alberta
T5Q 1Z5

1. Jodie went hiking

- ☐ in the town of Banff
- ☐ to the hot springs
- ☐ to get warm
- ☐ in Banff National Park

2. Jodie's dad used binoculars to

- ☐ find the hiking trail
- ☐ scare the bear
- ☐ see something far away
- ☐ go to the hot springs

3. The MOST IMPORTANT thing about a national park is that it is a place to

- ☐ hike in the mountains
- ☐ protect natural environments
- ☐ swim in hot springs
- ☐ take pictures of animals

4. Jodie MOST LIKELY mailed this postcard from the town of

- ☐ Pineview
- ☐ Alberta
- ☐ Westwood
- ☐ Banff

II. Read the following article and answer questions 5 to 8.

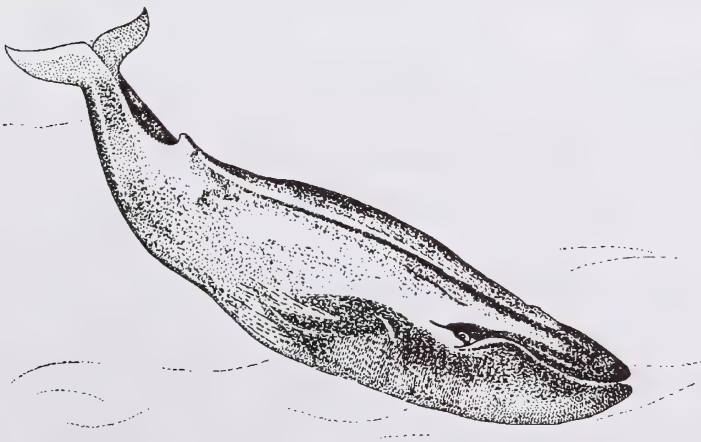
BLUE WHALES GIANTS OF THE OCEAN

The blue whale is the largest of all the whales, and the largest animal that has ever lived on earth. It can measure up to 30 metres and weigh as much as 136 tonnes. Its huge, slate-blue body is the size of a train at its midpoint, and the blue whale's heart is as big as a car. No wonder the blue whale is called the giant of the sea!

Blue whales are baleen whales, which means they eat krill—small marine plants and animals. They can gulp gigantic mouthfuls in a pleated pouch that forms the underside of their upper bodies. When this pouch is full of water and krill it can expand the blue's total volume by six times! Like all baleen whales it has plates of horny material called baleen growing from its upper jaws. The krill gets trapped in the fringes of the baleen.

The blue whale is an endangered species. It has been hunted for its meat, oil, and baleen. Hunters could easily spot a "blue" by its enormous, 20 metre blow, and could find it in all the oceans of the world. Now that the blue whale is protected, scientists hope this gentle giant will make a comeback.

Sharon Siamon



5. How big is a blue whale's heart?

- ☐ The size of a train
- ☐ As big as a car
- ☐ 30 metres
- ☐ 136 tonnes

6. What is the meaning of the underlined word krill?

- ☐ Small marine plants and animals
- ☐ Pleated pouch
- ☐ Species that are protected
- ☐ Gigantic mouthfuls

7. Today, blue whales are protected from

- ☐ marine plants
- ☐ marine animals
- ☐ scientists
- ☐ hunters

8. Scientists hope that blue whales will

- ☐ become more plentiful
- ☐ turn into gentle animals
- ☐ have a 20-metre blow
- ☐ be an endangered species

III. Read the following story and answer questions 9 to 13.

from SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL

The rain came and passed, but strange clouds hung in the northwest, low and black and green. And the air grew still.

In the morning, Sarah dressed in a pair of overalls and went to the barn to have an argument with Papa. She took apples for Old Bess and Jack.

"Women don't wear overalls," said Caleb, running along behind her like one of Sarah's chickens.

"This woman does," said Sarah crisply.

Papa stood by the fence.

"I want to learn how to ride a horse," Sarah told him. "And then I want to learn how to drive the wagon. By myself."

Jack leaned over and nipped at Sarah's overalls. She fed him an apple. Caleb and I stood behind Sarah.

"I can ride a horse, I know," said Sarah. "I rode once when I was twelve. I will ride Jack." Jack was Sarah's favorite.

Papa shook his head. "Not Jack," he said. "Jack is sly."

"I am sly, too," said Sarah stubbornly.

Papa smiled. "Ayuh," he said, nodding. "But not Jack."

"Yes, Jack!" Sarah's voice was very loud.

"I can teach you how to drive a wagon. I have already taught you how to plow."

"And then I can go to town. By myself."

"Say no, Papa," Caleb whispered beside me.

"That's a fair thing, Sarah," said Papa. "We'll practice."

A soft rumble of thunder sounded. Papa looked up at the clouds.

"Today? Can we begin today?" asked Sarah.

"Tomorrow is best," said Papa, looking worried. "I have to fix the house roof. A portion of it is loose. And there's a storm coming."

Patricia MacLachlan

- 9. This writing is MOST LIKELY part of a**
- ☐ legend
 - ☐ poem
 - ☐ novel
 - ☐ fairy tale
- 10. Jack nipped at Sarah's overalls because he wanted**
- ☐ attention
 - ☐ to play
 - ☐ to be mean
 - ☐ Sarah's apple
- 11. Sarah wanted to learn to drive the wagon because she**
- ☐ was sly like Jack
 - ☐ knew how to plow
 - ☐ knew a storm was coming
 - ☐ wanted to go to town by herself
- 12. The main characters in this story are**
- ☐ Caleb and Jack
 - ☐ Sarah and Caleb
 - ☐ Papa and Sarah
 - ☐ Jack and Bess
- 13. We know this story took place long ago because**
- ☐ the clouds were strange
 - ☐ people rode horses
 - ☐ people rode to town in wagons
 - ☐ horses liked apples

Key and Descriptors for Practice Reading Questions

Item	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard
1	D	Informational	Main ideas/details	Attend to details
2	C	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Relate what is known to new information
3	B	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Use prior knowledge to enhance understanding of reading
4	D	Informational	Organization of ideas	Use visual clues in conjunction with text format to make sense of reading
5	B	Informational	Main ideas/details	Identify key details to make a generalization
6	A	Informational	Associating meaning	Use semantic clues to recognize word meanings
7	D	Informational	Main ideas/details	Identify main ideas
8	A	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Use prior experience to expand understanding and draw conclusions
9	C	Narrative /poetic	Organization of ideas	Recognize genre
10	D	Narrative /poetic	Main ideas/details	Recognize character motivation
11	D	Narrative /poetic	Main ideas/details	Recognize character motivation
12	C	Narrative /poetic	Main ideas/details	Differentiate between main and supporting characters
13	C	Narrative /poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw conclusions by relating what is known to new information

Preparing Students for the Test

The best way to prepare students for writing the Language Arts test is to use instructional time teaching the important learnings in Grade 3 Language Arts.

Teachers may also wish, however, to familiarize their students with the format of both the multiple-choice and the written-response components of the test by having them work through the practice questions and writing assignment included in this bulletin.

The Student Evaluation Branch has published documents entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*, which came from the responses given on previous Grade 3 Language Arts achievement tests. Teachers may wish to share these samples with students and to familiarize students with the scoring criteria that appear in this bulletin.

We hope that teachers will share the following information with students to help them prepare for the Language Arts test.

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Listen carefully to the instructions as they are read out loud and do what the assignment asks them to do. It is important for them to read over the instructions and think about what they will write.

Talk about their ideas. Students will have a chance to share their ideas with some of their classmates. They should remember, though, that each student is to write his/her own story. Sharing ideas is just to help them get started.

Plan their writing. Students should make a plan that helps them organize their ideas. They may want to try a

- list (characters, setting, etc.)
- chart (beginning, middle, ending)
- web

Think about some of the things that make good writing, such as

- using important ideas that make sense together
- including details or describing events, characters, and their actions
- organizing ideas in an order that makes sense
- using words and sentences that help the reader understand what they want to say

Check their work and make any changes on their first draft.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material, using the strategy that works best for them. They may

- read the selection and think carefully about it before they try to answer the questions OR
- read the questions first and then read the selection, remembering the questions they need to answer

Read a selection more than once. It is all right for students to read a selection as many times as they need to in order to answer the questions. Remind them to go back to the reading selection before answering each question.

Make sure they look at all types of information given. Information may be given in words, pictures, cartoons, or charts.

Make sure they read carefully all four choices before choosing the answer they think is best. All of the answers might seem partly correct, but only one is the **best** answer. If they don't see a correct or best answer right away, encourage them to try to find two choices that make the most sense and choose one of them.

For further suggestions see *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities*, Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, pages LD122 to 124.

Credits

Sharon Siamon. “Blue Whales: Giants of the Ocean” from *Chinook* (Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1986). Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

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Alberta Education Contact

Questions or comments regarding this bulletin should be directed to:

Terry Gamble
Grade 3 Assessment Specialist
Achievement Testing Program
Student Evaluation Branch
Alberta Education
Box 43
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 0L2

Telephone: 403-427-0010
FAX: 403-422-3206
E-mail address: tgamble@edc.gov.ab.ca

To be connected toll-free in Alberta, dial 310-0000.

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